

JOHN



What was the Holiday Season like in your hometown ?

The Porter Brothers of Niagara, NY

"Twas the Night before Christmas."

Fresh Flowers

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Welcome to JOHN

Still not time to say goodbye to 2020, although it has not been the best of years, there are still many hopes for a brighter future.

Hope this issue will be enjoyable to all. Christine and I want to be the first to wish all a very happy & safe holiday season.

As I was putting this issue together, I thought it would be good to share some of my growing up Christmas experiences. I then thought, what if I invited my readers to share their stories, with plenty of space on my website under the Trending tab, I will share these stories.

Your contributions would be most welcome. Just email them to me by December 23rd.

The Porter's of Niagara take over the rest of this issue and the brother's history, in and around Niagara Falls is well documented. It was a delight to receive a photo from Thomas F. LaClair showing his Deline ancestors on a trip that included a ride on the Whirlpool Aero Car in the late 1930s or early 1940s. Thanks, Tom.

What would the Holiday season be without the reading of the "Twas the Night before Christmas." Clement Moore, the author of the poem was a reticent man and it is believed that a family friend, Miss H. Butler, sent a copy of the poem to the TROY Sentinel who published the poem. Orville L. Holley was the editor of the Sentinel. The condition of publication was that the author was to remain anonymous. JAH

What was the Holiday Season like in your hometown?

A chance to share your experience.

I thought it would be fun to have my readers participate by sharing some of their memorable Christmas and Holiday experiences. To that end, if you care to share your story, it will be posted on the **Trending tab** on my website, holleypix.com. You will have until December 23rd to submit your story, I'm hoping for a good turnout in this special opportunity.

To get it started, I thought it would be good for me to share some of my favorite memories growing up in a small farming and mining community. First and foremost, our town was not filled with well-to-do people, just miners, farmers, and the band of necessary store keepers, yes bartenders too.

In my early years of grade school, real Christmas trees were the style. Several tree "lots" would pop up around town, mostly close to the gas stations because that was where everyone went most of the time. Our family trees were not fancy big ones, in tough times we still managed to get some type of tree, mostly a small one that would go a living room table without much fussing. One or two strings of lights and lots of paper chains that my sister and I would make or repair from the previous years "crop".

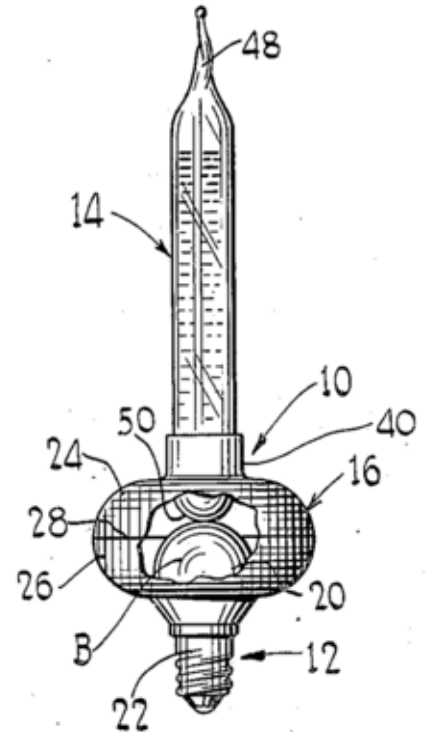
Lots of activity occurred around the tree as presents appeared. I was especially good at looking under the seals or better yet, tearing just a little corner to see if the contents would become available. As I look back, not too many presents were a surprise on Christmas morning! One delightful memory was when the Bubble lights came out. Our Grandmother brought a string over to us and we had quite a time making sure that the lights were positioned just right to get the full bubbling effect. Here is a little history on these lights, which now are some what back in style.



Bubble lights for Christmas decoration were first patented in the United States by Carl W. Otis in 1944 and introduced there in 1946 by NOMA one of the largest American manufacturers of Christmas lights. While NOMA was the largest company to make these lights, other manufacturers included Raylite (Paramount/Sterling), Royal Electric Company, and Good Lite/Peerless. Bubble lights were very popular as Christmas Lights from the 1940s through the 1970s. before miniature "fairy" lights became popular.



A Christmas bubble light, as depicted in a drawing in U.S. Patent 2,353,063



Next came the artificial trees. Of course they were out of our price range, but we liked the real one better anyway. Then came the aluminum trees, by this time I was married and had a house of my own and yes we got an aluminum tree, which didn't catch on or last for us.



Between the late 1950s and mid 1960s aluminum Christmas trees gained popularity in the United States. The foil needles on these trees were illuminated from below by a rotating color wheel. The aluminum tree phenomena prompted other companies to manufacture many different types of artificial trees: life-like pines, spruces, and even trees dusted with artificial snow.



Contnuing on: One of the holiday special events, was when Grandpa and Grandma Jacobson would come from Denver and take us back with them for a weekend. Grandpa would pack us all in the car (Saturday night) and we would drive to downtown Denver so we could see the window displays that the May Co. and the Devner Dry Goods Co. would put on, then a drive through City Park and Civic Center to see their lighted displays. In case you are wondering what Grandma **always** bought me for Christmas was a good pair of dress pants from one of these stores. I could look forward to this present like clockwork. Since my Grandpa was a very good dresser, she probably thought that a good pair of dress pants would do the same for me.

We had just two schools in town, High School (7-12) & Grade School (1-6). Both schools combined to put on the Christmas program every year. The program had the band and the choirs along with each grade school class singing a pre-assigned song. The one year I remember was when I was in the third grade. This year was pretty tough for me, having lost a lot of school time because of a serious ear ache problem. Our teacher was patient with us, as the preformance night approached, she requested that the girls would wear a white blouse and black skirt and the boys would wear dark slacks and a white shirt. (Thanks Grandma for the pants). We were already and excited when the night came. My Mother took us to the high school gym and as we entered, my sister took off to join her class. My Mother expecting me to do the same, was quite surprised when I followed her into the parent and guests section. Here was the problem, I knew that these events where attended by just about everybody in town and as soon as I saw all these people staring at me, there was no way I was going to join my class up in the balcony. In spite of my teachers prodding, I remained in the seat next to mommy.



Sure glad the shyness did wear off. During my Jr. & Sr. years, I got up in front of all those people and did the narrative for my classmates as they re-enacted the Christmas Story.

My Dad had a large garage and workshop at home, I was often a casual watcher as he went about his work. Then one day he told me to stay out of the workshop, yes he was gruff at times and I knew that I had to respect the command. It was about a month before Christmas, but I had no idea what was going on in the workshop that would keep me out.

Christmas morning brought both my sister and I surprises. For her it was a homemade cradle for her dolls and for me, a blue wagon with real balloon tires (the ones you had to blow up with air). Just the best present a kid could expect. I found out later that the wagon was given to Dad and he did all the work repairing and painting so I would have this great present. Sure glad I didn't peek unto the workshop because the gift was out of this world!

The winter season of 1954/55 was pretty tough on the miners in town. The mines were late in starting up because of the warm weather. Over the years, the fall mining season was a relief for most of the miners. It was a chance to get some good paychecks and to catch up on paying off the credit that was accumulated around town during the summer months. Dad got paid just a few days before Christmas and we all set off to town to buy the Christmas food and other things we could afford. My sister and I had been hoping for one of those new portable record players, which we agreed that we could share equally. We had little hope of getting one because we knew that the money was just not there for that kind of purchase.



Shopping was done and on the way out of town, Dad pulled into a parking space next to the music store. He told Mom to go ahead and get "it". Mom went into the music store and came back with a large package. Which, when opened by us on Christmas morning, was a really cool portable record player and better yet, the Bing Crosby White Christmas Lp album. This gift was just another time when our parents made us feel good. We knew that at times they gave up so much so that their children would not totally go without. JAH

Please do not hold back on sharing your experiences. I look forward to your stories long or short.

My Parents: John A. Holley & June M. Holley

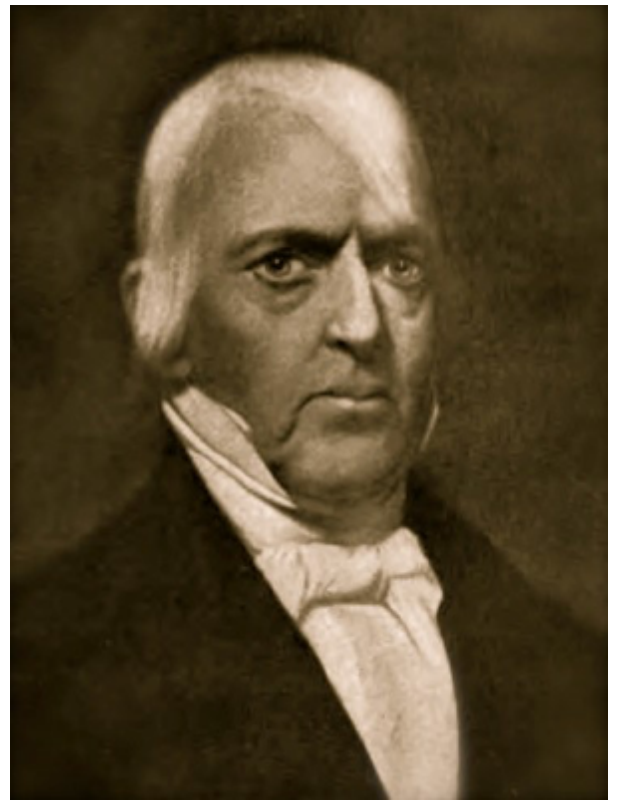


Judge Augustus Porter

One of Niagara Falls' earliest settlers, Judge Augustus Porter and family actually owned Goat Island between the American Falls, and the Horseshoe Canadian Falls.

In a late 1924 Biological sketch, he was written of in this manner:

We will look ahead a few years for a perspective before we begin the sketch chronologically. Judge Augustus Porter was virtually the first white settler of what is now the city of



Niagara Falls, called Manchester up to 1840. He was a pathfinder and pioneer in the promotion and development of the power of the Niagara River and in those things which have made this city great. He was an engineer, a lawyer and a business man, as well as statesman. He built the first mills to use Niagara power. He promoted the then great project of the construction of the hydraulic canal. He, as a civil engineer, surveyed some of the roads through the wilderness that lead to the present city. He was a pioneer of great lakes transportation. In official life he was the first county judge of Niagara county as it was first erected, and including Erie county, in 1808. He was the first postmaster of what later became the village of Niagara Falls. With his brother, Gen. Peter B. Porter, his name is writ large in the public and business affairs of Western New York, and beyond.

Judge Porter died in 1849, aged four score.

The genealogy of the Porter family traces back to sterling English origin, and representatives of the name settled in New England in the early colonial era of our national history. Judge Augustus Porter was born at Salisbury, Conn., in January 1769, and the family home was established at Canandaigua, N.Y., in the year 1800. Judge Porter first came to Niagara County in 1795, and incidentally he learned of the now historic ridge leading from the Niagara River, at Lewiston, eastward to Rochester, the Indians having given him the information, which led him to exploit the tracing of a road along the ridge, in 1789. After visiting the Niagara Falls district in 1795, he returned to his home, but in the following year came again to Western New York, as head of a party of surveyors commissioned to lay out townships in this sparsely settled part of the state. He was a skilled surveyor and did a large amount of important surveying work in the early period of the history of Western New York. In May of 1789, Augustus Porter set out from Schenectady as one of a party of surveyors from western Massachusetts and Connecticut to locate some lands which had been bought by a group of neighbors, of which his father was one.

The first wife of Judge Porter bore the maiden name of Lavinia Steele, the one son, Augustus S., born of this union. After the death of his first wife, he wedded Jane Howell, and they became the parents of two sons and two daughters: Albert H., Peter B., Jr., Lavinia and Jane S.

"When Augustus Porter located in Niagara Falls, then called Manchester, the place was nearly a wilderness, there being only a few decayed log cabins and a dilapidated barracks at Fort Schlosser. Judge Porter encouraged others to locate here and assist in building up the community in a business way. After the destruction of his first house, he erected the substantial building which is still standing and still occupied by members of the Porter family. For more than a century this house has been a center of gracious hospitality, and under its friendly roof many prominent men and women, from all over the nation, as well as many from foreign lands, have been entertained."

In 1794 he participated in the last council with the Indians of the Iroquois Confederacy, which meeting is still commemorated by a stone and tablet in Canandaigua. It was then that he first met Andrew Ellicot, who was United States Surveyor General, and by whom he was engaged as an assistant in running the line from Pennsylvania to Lake Ontario. Subsequently he made the acquaintance of Oliver Phelps and was selected by him for important surveys on lands west of Seneca Lake and this, in turn, led to engagements by Robert Morris on extensive surveys on his large holdings leading, again, to like work on lands of the Holland Purchase. During these times, too, he made purchase himself, including the buying of an interest in a tract of 20,000 where now is located the city of Rochester and, in 1795, purchased a tract six miles northeast of Avon and one-half mile west of Honeoye Falls.

In 1795 he was joined by a younger brother, Peter B. Porter, who then settled in Canandaigua as a lawyer and began a career of national brilliancy and of the closest of associations with that of his older brother. In this year, too, Augustus Porter arrived in Niagara Falls in company with a party of surveyors and assistants to explore and lay out townships in the Western Reserve. From Chippawa Creek he took passage, in company with his friend, Juday Colt, for Presque Isle (now Erie) on a British vessel, as still the British were holding Oswego, Niagara, Detroit and Mackinac. At Buffalo the only then residents were: Johnson, a British Indian interpreter; Winnie, and Indian trader, and two other families. In all the Western Reserve not a family resided. In 1796 he was employed by the Connecticut Land Company as chief surveyor, with corps of 50 assistants, to make a traverse of the southern shore of Lake Erie. This tract was estimated to contain more than 3,500,000 acres. He laid out the city of Cleveland, which he named after General Moses Cleveland, who was the Connecticut Land Company's managing agent.

In 1797 there was built at the mouth of the Genesee river the first vessel of U.S. registry on the Great Lakes. This was the schooner *Jemima* by Eli Granger and in which Augustus Porter was a part owners. In the succeeding year this vessel became the property of Augustus Porter and his brother, Peter B. They afterwards owned a fleet of vessels. In 1802 he obtained the contract for carrying the mails from Utica to Fort Niagara and, during the same year, was elected to the New York Legislature in place of his brother, Peter B., who had withdrawn in his favor. In 1803 Judge Porter and his associates leased from the State the Portage Road and that year he built the first saw mill on the river shore. In 1807 the firm of Porter, Barton & Co. was formed to do a general forwarding business from Oswego, via the Portage, to Mackinaw, Chicago and Fort Wayne. In 1808 he built the original

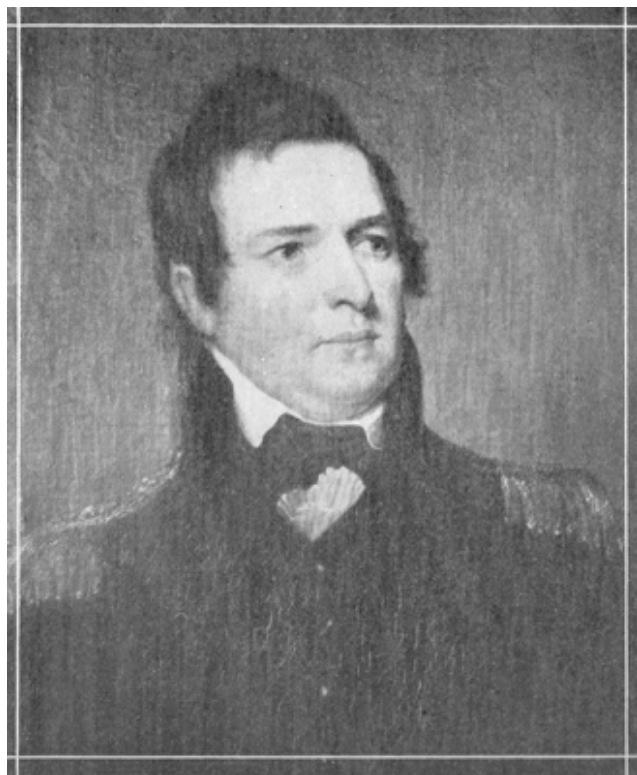


of the present Porter residence on Buffalo Avenue, which was burned by the British during the War of 1812, and the present house was built in 1818. In 1826 he, with his son, A. H. Porter, built a paper mill at Bath, now Green

Island. In 1816 Judge Porter and Gen. Porter acquired Goat Island from the State and it remained the property of the Porter family until 1885 when the State took it as a part of the Niagara Reservation.

Major General Peter B. Porter

As of 1925, Major General Peter Porter was the only man who ever resided in Niagara Falls who was a member of the cabinet of a President of the United States, and General Porter was also a national character in military affairs, as well as in public life in general, and as a lawyer and business man he bulked large for beyond the confines of the Niagara Frontier. He and his brother, Judge Augustus Porter, were the first and principal factors in the settlement and development of the Niagara Frontier during the first half of the 19th century.



Shortly before his death in December 1925, Hon. Peter A. Porter, his grandson, wrote the following brief sketch of General Porter which was found among his papers after his death:

"A Representative from New York"

"Born in Salisbury, Conn., August 4 1773; was graduated from Yale College in 1791; was admitted to the bar and began practice from Canandaigua, NY; in 1793 held various local offices; Member of New York Assembly in 1802; moved to Black Rock, Buffalo, NY, in 1809; elected as a Democrat to the Eleventh and Twelfth Congresses, March 4, 1809, to March 3, 1813; declined re-nomination to the Thirteenth Congress in order to serve with his constituents in the War of 1812. He was a close personal friend of Henry Clay who appointed him chairman of House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations, and as such General Porter reported the resolution for the Declaration of the War of 1812. Served in the War of 1815; was offered the command of the United States Northern Army for the 1815, but the Treaty of Ghent put an end to hostilities. Next to Clay, he was the most prominent of the "War Hawks" leading the supporters of that war in the North, as Grundy led them in the South (the gentlemen from **Genesee** and **Tennessee**, as John Randolph used to refer to them).

"In 1810 he was named as one of the committee in New York State to decide as to an inland canal from the Hudson to Lake Erie, as against the earlier plan of a Federal ship canal around the Falls of Niagara, of which General Porter had been an earnest advocate. His appointment on that committee was opposed on the ground that being one of the lessees of the Niagara Portage, he would naturally be strongly opposed to any inland canal, which would destroy the portage business. In spite of that opposition, he was name on that committee, and , satisfied that an inland canal would be for the ultimate best interests of the State, he voted in favor of it, regardless of the fact that his firm's portage business would be killed by the shorter route".

"General Porter was presented with a gold medal under a joint resolution of Congress, of date November 4, 1814, for gallantry in the conflicts of Chippewa, Niagara, Lundy's Lane, and Fort Erie in Upper Canada, and a gold-handled sword by the State of New York, for the same services. He was re-elected to the Fourteenth Congress, and served from March 4, 1815, to January 23, 1816, resigning in order to accept the appointment as the United States Commissioner under the Treaty of Ghent to locate our northern border". He was Secretary of State of New York in 1815.

"He was appointed by President John Quincy Adams as Secretary of War, serving from June 21, 1828, to March 9, 1829".

"In 1830, or thereabouts, he was again elected to the New York Assembly for the purpose of adjusting difficulties that had arisen between the Holland Land Company and it's grantees.



On one side of Porter's medal is his bust in profile, name, and title, and on the other the figure of Victory, standing, holding in one hand a palm branch and wreath, and in the other three little flags, on which are the names respectively of CHIPPEWA, NIAGARA, and ERIE. Sitting near, the Muse of History is recording the events. Around are the words "RESOLUTION OF CONGRESS, NOVEMBER 8, 1814," and below the names and dates of the three battles.

"In 1836 he removed to Niagara Falls, and died there on March 20, 1844. With his associates he initiated and carried on the early commerce of the Niagara Frontier and of Lake Erie at least. He held other public positions besides those mentioned by his grandson above, including that of county clerk of Ontario county. He travelled through the State and helped Governor DeWitt Clinton, his father, select the route for the Erie Canal. In 1814 he was made a brigadier general of volunteers by Governor Daniel D. Tompkins of New York, and was brevetted a major general after the battle of Lundy's Lane which was fought July 25, 1814. In 1815, President James Madison appointed him a major general in the United States army.

Beginning in 1816, together with his brother, Judge Augustus Porter, he owned Goat Island and much of the land immediately adjoining the rapids and falls of the Niagara river, which territory is now included in the city of Niagara Falls, and was purchased when the State of New York established the Niagara Reservation in 1885. They also owned land near the Niagara river in the Black Rock section of Buffalo at the American end of the international bridge. Fort Porter at that point, which was removed to make way for the entrance to the Buffalo-Fort Erie Peace Bridge, was named after General Porter.

Late in life, General Porter married Mrs. Letitia Grayson, daughter of former Attorney-General Breckenridge of Kentucky. She died at Black Rock in 1831, aged 41 years. They had one son, Peter A. Porter, who became distinguished, being the commander of the Eighth New York Heavy Artillery which went from this section to the Civil War, and Colonel Porter was killed at the battle of Cold Harbor June 3, 1864. General and Mrs. Porter also had one daughter, Elizabeth Porter.

General Porter was a member of the International Boundary Commission which in 1819 established the present boundary between the United States and Canada, which, at this point, is located 200 feet out from Goat Island which the Porter Brothers and their descendants owned from 1816 to 1885. Beginning in 1816, together with his brother, Judge Augustus Porter, he owned Goat Island and much of the land immediately adjoining the rapids and falls of the Niagara river, which territory is now included in the city of Niagara Falls, and was purchased when the State of New York established the Niagara Reservation in 1885. They also owned land near the Niagara river in the Black Rock section of Buffalo at the American end of the international bridge. Fort Porter at that point, which was removed to make way for the entrance to the Buffalo-Fort Erie Peace Bridge, was named after General Porter.

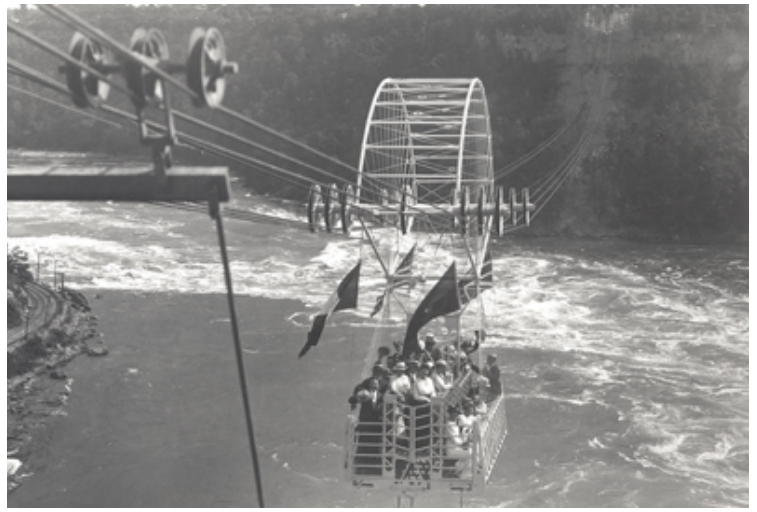
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Whirlpool Aero Car

The attraction began operations on August 8, 1916, taking its maiden voyage just after 3pm witnessed by a hundreds of spectators gathered to see the amazing engineering feat in action for the first time. The first passengers included Spanish dignitaries, and the car was adorned with the flags of four nations, Canada, Spain, the United States and France.



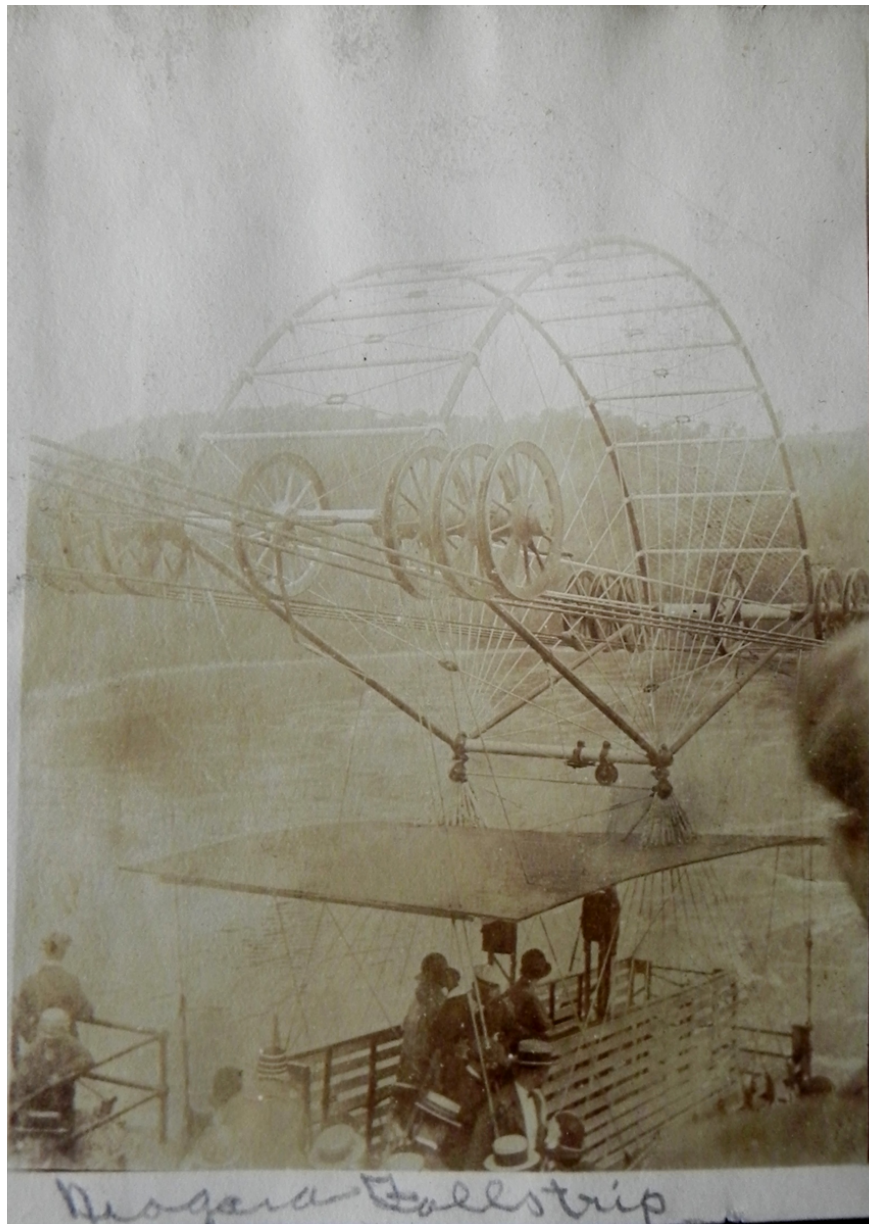
In its first few years of operation the Aero Car struggled to be profitable. A drop in travel due to World War I in particular negatively impacted visitation and the Spanish operators began looking to divest themselves of the attraction. Over the next 50 years operation of the attraction would change hands several times, until it was purchased in full by Niagara Parks in 1968.

Here is a photo to go along with the Niagara Falls article.

This photo came from my Deline ancestors of Watertown, New York. Although not exact dated, it is the late 1930s or early 1940s.

Thanks, Tom

Thomas F. LaClair
Clayton, New York



Niagara Falls trip

Clement Moore Is Believed to Have Written "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in December 24, 1822

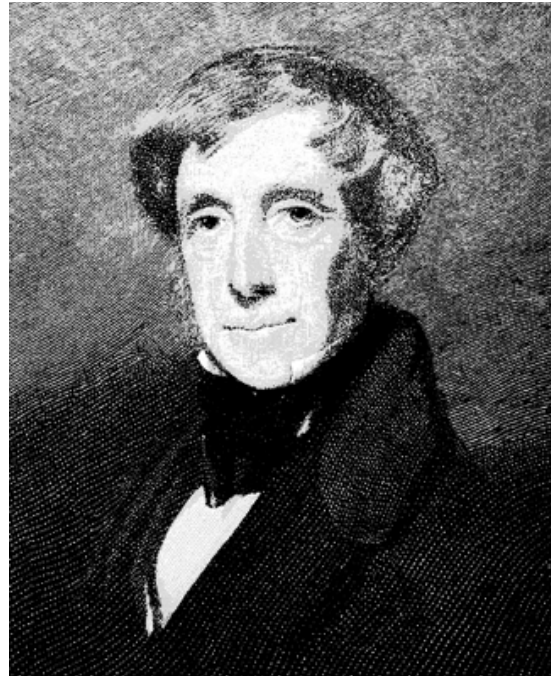
Perhaps you have read these famous words: "'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse." 'Twas the day before Christmas, December 24, the day in 1822 that Clement Moore is thought to have composed the classic poem that was then called "A Visit from St. Nicholas." You probably know it as "The Night Before Christmas." While traveling home from Greenwich Village, in Manhattan, where he had bought a turkey to donate to the poor during the holiday season, Moore penned the story for the amusement of his six children, with whom he shared the poem that evening.

He was inspired by the plump, bearded Dutchman who took him by sleigh on his errand through the snow-covered streets of New York City.

Moore's vision of St. Nicholas draws upon Dutch-American and Norwegian traditions of a magical, gift-giving figure that appears at Christmas time. It also is based on the German legend of a visitor who enters homes through chimneys. Clement Moore knew of such folklore as a learned man of literature. He was born into a well-

respected New York family in 1779. His father, Benjamin Moore, had served as president of Columbia University and Episcopal bishop of New York, participating in the inauguration of George Washington as the nation's first president.

Clement Moore graduated from Columbia. As a scholar, he is said to have been embarrassed by the light-hearted holiday poem, which somehow made its way into the public without his knowledge in December 1823. Moore did not publish it under his name until 1844. Many editions of "The Night Before Christmas" have been published over the years.



There are four hand-written copies of the poem that are known to exist and three are in museums, including the [New-York Historical Society](#) library.

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through
the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And Mamma in her 'kachel', and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap;
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the latch.
The moon, on the breast of the new-fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny rein-deer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his couriers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

FRESH FLOWERS



**"Great minds discuss ideas;
average minds discuss events;
small minds discuss people."**

Eleanor Roosevelt